

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES



PUBLIC RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVES



WHAT DOES A PUBLIC RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE DO?

Public Relations tell an organization's story to its public and helps shape the organization and the way it performs. PUBLIC RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVES (PR Reps) develop and enhance positive images of their employer. As advocates for organizations or individuals, they build and maintain a carefully planned relationship with the public. PR Reps use various types of media such as publications, special reports, videos, and multimedia programs to influence the way their employer is viewed by the public, workers, stockholders, and legislators.

Public Relations Representatives perform the following tasks:

- Develop programs to analyze problems and opportunities, define

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INTEREST AREA
ENTERPRISING



goals, identify the target audience, and recommend and plan activities.

- Gather information from management, colleagues, and external sources to cultivate relationships.
- Write and edit reports, news releases, brochures, speeches, videos, scripts, trade magazine articles, product information, technical materials, employee publications, newsletters, shareholder reports, and other management communications.
- Establish systems for the distribution of information to newspaper, broadcast, general, and trade publication editors.
- Plan news conferences, convention exhibits, new facility and anniversary celebrations, contest and award programs, tours, and special meetings.
- Communicate in person, and prepare and deliver speeches.
- Gather facts through interviews, library materials, informal conversations, and opinion research.

Tasks of entry-level Public Relations Representatives often involve the following:

- Answer calls for information from the press and public.
- Work on invitation lists and details for a press conference.
- Escort visitors and clients to events.
- Help with research.
- Write brochures.
- Deliver releases to editorial offices.
- Compile media distribution lists.

Public Relations Representatives may have titles that reflect a specialization in Media Relations, Community Relations, Government Relations, Special Events Coordinators, and Employee Relations. PR Representatives work in public relations firms, private companies, schools, non-profit organizations, hospitals, universities and colleges, high

technology firms, and government agencies. PR Reps who work for government agencies are called Public Information Officers, Information Officers, Public Affairs Specialists, Press Secretaries, or Communication Specialists.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Public Relations Representatives include:

- Writing – Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Persuasion – Persuading others to change their minds or behavior.
- Critical Thinking – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- Sales and Marketing – Knowledge of principles and methods for showing, promoting, and selling products or services. This includes marketing strategy and tactics, product demonstration, sales techniques, and sales control systems.
- Communications and Media – Knowledge of media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Fluency of Ideas – The ability to come up with a number of ideas about a topic.
- Originality – The ability to come up with unusual or clever ideas about a given topic or situation, or to develop creative ways to solve a problem.

Creativity, initiative, good judgment, verbal, and written communication skills are essential. An outgoing personality, self-confidence, and enthusiasm are key personality traits for a PR Rep.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Public relations programs operate against deadlines. Under such high-pressure conditions, nine-to-five schedules are rare. Public relations executives are not tied to their desks for long periods. Public relations offices are busy places; work schedules are irregular and frequently interrupted.

Union Membership

Public Relations Representatives who work for government agencies may belong to public employee unions.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID) and represents the broad occupational group Public Relations Specialists which includes Public Relations Representatives:

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|--|--------|
| Estimated number of workers in 2000: | 15,900 |
| Estimated number of workers in 2010: | 23,000 |
| Projected Growth 2000-2010: | 44.7% |
| Est. openings due to separations by 2010: | 3,300 |
| <i>These figures do not include self-employment.</i> | |

Keen competition will likely continue among recent college graduates with a degree in journalism, public relations, advertising, or a related field as the number of applicants is expected to exceed the number of job openings. However, recognition that good public relations are vital in an increasingly competitive business environment should spur demand for PR Reps in organizations of all sizes.

Trends

The increased use of computer technology, such as Web pages and e-mail, has been the most significant development in public relations roles in the last several years. A joint survey of the profession by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) reports that 34 percent viewed technology as offering the greatest opportunity for career advancement over the next five years.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Public Relations Specialists 2002 Wages

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|-------------------------|----------|----|---------|
| Hourly wages range from | \$18.07 | to | \$31.60 |
| Average hourly wage | \$26.51 | | |
| Average annual wage | \$55,135 | | |

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.

The range of compensation for Public Relations practitioners is broad. Earnings depend on such factors as the qualifications and experience, responsibilities of the position, financial strength of the organization, and geographic area. Salaries vary among public relations firms, public agencies, corporations, and non-profit organizations. Corporations usually pay higher salaries than public agencies and may give bonuses and stock purchase options.

According to the joint IABC/PRSA 2000 salary survey, the median annual income was \$53,000 in the United States and \$60,000 in the Pacific region.

Hours

Most PR Reps work a standard 40-hour week, but overtime is common. Meetings, community functions, business lunches, travel assignments, special speaking and writing commitments, and unscheduled work on "crisis" situations often mean long hours.

Benefits

Benefits include vacation and holidays, sick leave, medical and dental insurance, retirement plans, and sometimes stock purchase options.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THIS JOB?

Education and Training

A college degree combined with public relations experience, usually gained through an internship, is considered excellent training for public relations work. Preferred majors are public relations, English, or journalism. Courses in advertising, business administration, political

science, psychology, sociology, creative writing, and computers are highly recommended by PR professionals. High school students can develop useful skills by writing for school newspapers, working for campus broadcasting stations, volunteering for political campaigns, or working as a page (messenger) for the Legislature. Public contact and persuasive skills can also be gained in sales jobs. Some employers seek applicants who demonstrate solid communication skills and experience in a field related to the firm's business specialty. Successful PR Reps have a thorough understanding of people and human psychology.

Licensing and Certification

The Public Relations Society of America administers a program of study and examination to qualify members to use the term "Accredited in Public Relations" (APR). PR Reps must have at least five years of experience in the field and pass a comprehensive six-hour examination. The International Association of Business Communicators also has an accreditation program. Candidates must have five years of experience in the communication field and pass a written and oral examination. Members can use the title "Accredited Business Communicator" (ABC).

Continuing Education

Continuing education in public relations is part of maintaining the APR designation. Continuing education is a means of earning more income and making oneself more valuable within the PR industry.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

In large organizations, PR Reps may start as trainees in a formal training program. Promotions come as employees prove they can handle more demanding assignments. Non-profit organizations often provide many opportunities for PR Reps to learn new tasks. A typical PR career path within a public relations firm may begin as a research or account assistant then to account executive and finally account supervisor. Some PR Reps become vice president and eventually senior vice president. More and more PR Reps are obtaining a master's in business to complement their PR background.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Job seekers can find job openings in classified ads, trade journals, human resources departments or government personnel agencies, professional associations, radio stations and broadcasting companies, social services organizations, and youth organizations. Applying directly to companies and public relations agencies is highly effective. Internships with public relations counseling firms, corporate departments, or nonprofit organizations are valuable for people still attending school. Graduates should also register with their university career center.

Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Public Relations Service. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/isloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
33 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003-2376
(212) 995-2230
www.prsa.org

International Association of Business
Communicators (IABC)
One Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 544-4700
(800) 776-4222
www.iabc.com

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

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| Newspaper Reporters | No. 113 |
| Technical Writers | No. 138 |

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

| | |
|--|---------|
| SOC (<i>Standard Occupational Classification</i>) | |
| Public Relations Specialists | 27-3031 |

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|--|------------|
| O*NET (<i>Occupational Information Network</i>) | |
| Public Relations Specialists | 27-3031-00 |

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|--|-------|
| OES (<i>Occupational Employment Statistics</i>) | |
| Public Relations Specialists | 34008 |

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|---|-------------|
| DOT (<i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i>) | |
| Public Relations Representative | 165.167-014 |